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Sotah Daf 31

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Daf Notes is currently being dedicated to the neshamot of

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May the studying of the Daf Notes be a zechus for their neshamot and may their souls find peace in Gan Eden and be bound up in the Bond of life

### **“Alef” or “Vav”**

[The Mishna had stated: On that same day, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hurkanos expounded the following: Iyov served the Holy One, Blessed be He, solely out of love, as it is said [Iyov 13:15]: Though He might kill me, yet for Him, I will still yearn. But the matter remains uncertain, for did he mean “I will yearn for Him,” or perhaps he meant “I will not yearn”? We derive from another verse [ibid. 27:5]: Until I die I will not remove my wholesomeness from myself (no matter what happens to him, he will not cast away his devotion to Hashem), which teaches us that he acted out of love. Rabbi Yehoshua said: Who will remove the dust from your eyes, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai! For you expounded all your life that Iyov served the Omnipresent solely out of fear (and not out of love), as it is said [ibid. 1:8]: There was a man, who was wholesome and an upright man, one who fears God, and shuns evil. And has not Yehoshua, your disciple’s disciple, taught that he acted out of love?]

The Gemora asks: Why don’t we just look at the verse and see? If it is spelled with an “Alef” (*lamed, alef – meaning “no”*), it means “no,” and if it is spelled with a “Vav” (*lamed, vav – it means “for Him”*), it means “for Him?”

The Gemora counters: Is it true that wherever the word “lo” is spelled with an Alef that it means “no?” Doesn’t the verse state, “in all of their troubles “lo” – “he (to him)” is troubled?” Although the verse there is spelled with an Alef, it is translated as “he (to him).” If you will say that it indeed should be translated that “(he) is not troubled” because it is spelled with an Alef, the very next part of the verse says, “and an angel of His countenance shall save them.” The Gemora concludes that it is apparent that either spelling can be understood either way. [Although with an Alef it means “no” and with a “Vav” it means “to him,” when deriving verses with an Aggadic message, these words can be understood in either sense. Obviously, when looking at Torah prohibitions, no one will say that “Lo Sirtzach” means primarily that one should kill.] (31a)

### **Serving Out of Love and Fear**

The braisa states: Rabbi Meir noted that the verse describes both Iyov and Avraham as “G-d fearing.” He therefore derives that just as we know Avraham served Hashem out of love, so too, Iyov served Hashem out of love. How do we know that Avraham served Hashem out of love? This is evident from the verse, “The offspring of Avraham who loved Me.”



The *Gemora* asks: What is the difference between one who serves Hashem out of love and one who serves Hashem out of fear?

The answer is apparent from the following *braisa*: Rabbi Shimon ben Elozar says: Someone who serves Hashem out of love is greater than someone who serves Him out of fear. The merit of the latter is for one thousand generations, while the merit of the former is for two thousand generations. This is apparent from the verse, “for thousands for those who love Me and keep My commandments.” Another verse states, “and to those who keep my commandments for one thousand generations.”

The *Gemora* asks: Doesn't the first verse also describe the ones who keep His commandments, yet it has a different number of generations (*thousands instead of one thousand*)?

The *Gemora* answers: Each verse must be interpreted based on the word closest to the amount of generations. [*Being that “those who love Me” is next to “for thousands,” we therefore derive that those who serve Hashem out of love retain their merit for thousands of generations. This must mean that the other verse that describes “those who keep My commandments” is referring to those who do so out of fear.*]

There were two students who sat before Rava. One told Rava that the following verse was read to him in his dream: “What is the great good that You have foreseen for those who fear You?” The other said that he had the following verse read to him in his dream: “And all of those who found shelter by You

will be happy, they will rejoice forever...and they will be elated with You, the ones who love Your Name.” Rava replied: You are both completely righteous. One (*the latter*) serves Hashem out of love, while one (*the former*) serves out of fear. (31a)

WE SHALL RETURN TO YOU,  
KESHEIM SHEHAMAYIM

### ***Mishna***

If someone warned his wife and she proceeded to be secluded anyway, even if he heard this fact from a flying bird, he should divorce her and give her a *kesuvah*. These are the words of Rabbi Eliezer. Rabbi Yehoshua states: He can maintain her (*if he did not actually see she was secluded*) until the ones who knit in the moonlight start talking about her (*that she is guilty*). If one witness said that he actually saw that she had an affair, she would not drink. Moreover, even if this witness was a slave or maidservant, they are even believed to make her unfit (*even*) for receiving a *kesuvah*. Her mother-in-law, sister-in-law (*husband's sister*), co-wife, possible co-wife (*husband's brother's wife*), and stepdaughter are believed to make her get divorced, but not to make her lose her *kesuvah*.

The *Mishna* continues: One would think otherwise (*that one witness would not suffice*). Logic would seemingly dictate that if the first testimony (*seclusion*) that does not make her forbidden forever (*until she drinks*), requires two witnesses, certainly the second testimony (*the adultery*) that forbids her to her husband forever, should require two witnesses. The verse therefore states, “There are not

two witnesses,” implying that whatever witness there is about her is deemed sufficient.

Once this is established, it seems we should logically change the law of the first testimony as well. If the second testimony that forbids her forever can stand with just one witness, certainly the first testimony that does not stand forever should suffice with one witness!

The verse states, “Because he found in her a promiscuous “davar” – “matter,” and it also states, “By the word of two witnesses will be established a “davar” – “matter.” Just as the latter verse clearly requires two witnesses, so too, the subject of the former verse requires two witnesses.

If one witness says she had an affair and one says she did not, or if one woman says she had an affair while one says she did not, she still can drink. If one says she had an affair and two say she did not, she can still drink. If two said she had an affair and one said she did not, she cannot drink. (31a – 31b)

### **Amount of Witnesses**

The *Gemora* asks: Why do we need the *gezeirah shavah* (one of the thirteen principles of Biblical hermeneutics; it links two similar words from dissimilar verses in the Torah) teaching from the word “davar?” Why don’t we use the teaching “bah” – “in her” (regarding having an affair one witness is believed), but not regarding the warning or seclusion (is one witness believed)?

The *Gemora* answers: Here, too, we are incorporating this teaching of “bah” to teach us that two witnesses are required by the warning and the seclusion.

The *Gemora* asks: How do we know that one witness is not believed to say that she had an affair if there was no prior warning or seclusion?

The *Gemora* answers: The *gezeirah shavah* of “davar” tells us that two witnesses are required.

The *Gemora* asks: The reason that one witness is not believed (*in the latter case of our Mishna*) is because another witness contradicts the first witness. This implies that if there would be no contradicting witness, the first witness would be believed. How do we know this?

The *braisa* states: “And there was not a witness regarding her.” This must refer to two witnesses. How do we know? Another verse states, “One witness will not arise against a man etc.” Being that the verse said “witness,” why bother saying “one?” [“Witness” by definition is singular.] This teaches us that generally, whenever the word “witness” is mentioned in the Torah, it refers to a pair of witnesses, unless specified (*as in this verse – “one witness”*).

Accordingly, our verse (“And there was not a witness regarding her”) must mean that there were not two witnesses. The verse continues, “And she was not siezed (*forced*),” implying that she would then be forbidden. [Putting these verses together, this means that if there was a witness that she was not forced to

have an affair and did so willingly, she would be forbidden.]

The *Gemora* asks: Being that one witness is believed according to Torah law, how can another witness come later to contradict the first witness? Doesn't Ula say that wherever the Torah believed one witness for something, the witness is considered to have the status of two witnesses? Accordingly, the second witness is in fact contradicting someone with the status of two witnesses! [How does he have the power to do that?]

Ula therefore taught: The correct text in our *Mishna* should be that if one witness contradicts the witness who said she had an affair, she should *not* drink. This was also the position of Rabbi Yitzchak.

Rabbi Chiya disagrees and maintains that she would drink.

The *Gemora* challenges Rabbi Chiya from Ula's principle.

The *Gemora* answers that our *Mishna* is discussing a case where the two individual witnesses came to *Beis Din* simultaneously (the testimony of the first witness was not accepted yet, and therefore, it is not regarded as having the strength of two witnesses), whereas Ula was discussing a case where one witness testified after the other. (31b)

## DAILY MASHAL

### LOVE AND FEAR

The *Gemora* cites a *braisa*: Rabbi Meir noted that the verse describes both Iyov and Avraham as "G-d

fearing." He therefore derives that just as we know Avraham served Hashem out of love, so too, Iyov served Hashem out of love. How do we know that Avraham served Hashem out of love? This is evident from the verse, "The offspring of Avraham who loved Me."

The Stepler Gaon in *Birchas Peretz* notes that by "Akeidas Yitzchak," it is written: For now I know that you are fearing of God. It would seem that Avraham performed the binding of Yitzchak out of fear of Hashem; yet we know definitely that he performed this commandment out of love for Hashem. This is clearly evident from the *Gemora* in Sanhedrin (105b), which states: Love disregards the rule of dignified conduct. This is derived from Avraham, for it is written, And Avraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey. Our *Gemora* is a proof to this as well. If so, why does the Torah at the end of this portion point out that Avraham was a God-fearing man?

He explains that the "fear" mentioned in reference to Avraham Avinu was not merely a fear of retribution, but rather it was a "*yiras ha'romemus*," a fright on account of the realization of the unlimited Greatness and Strength of the Omnipresent. The Rambam writes that one who analyzes the Greatness of the Ribbono shel Olam, leads him to love Him. The love that Avraham Avinu had towards Hashem inspired him to fear Him, for through the love, he realized that if he should make a mistake in his service to Hashem, it will weaken the connection of love that existed between them.